2r Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 22

MARRIAGE IN HUNZA

THE Burusho population of Hunza is divided into four major clans, centred in Báltít, and several minor clans scattered over other villages. Aliábád, being a "new settlement," contained amongst its two hundred houses representatives of almost all the clans. Marriage outside the race is rare, but (as I have already said) exogamous marriage between the clans is the rule.

On the whole the Burusho cling to their settlements along the eight or nine-mile stretch of river below Áltít (two or three miles up-river of Báltít), at a height of 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea-level. They are not eager to colonize higher-lying districts, for they say their womenfolk refuse to live where the apricot will not ripen. If this is so the women show sound sense, for the dried apricot is one of their staple foods and almost their only source of sugar. The favourite winter breakfast is a hot porridge of these *batéring*. It thus happens that the higher river-stretches above Báltít are mainly settled (if at all) by Wakhi immigrants from Afghanistan. These are a quiet, peaceable folk, markedly less intelligent than the Burusho, loyal subjects of the Mir, well content with their good pasturages and crops of barley and not missing the wheat and the apricot to which they are unaccustomed. A few Burusho colonies are scattered among the Wakhi ones, but, though friendly relations exist, the two learn little of each other's language; and intermarriage, though it would not be taboo, is very rare.

Similarly a couple of the lower Hunza villages are inhabited by Shins, of the same stock as the Gilgit people, but again intermarriage is the exception. We had fully expected to

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have attributed it to the north-facing mountains which though richer in grass and timber are sorely stinted of the sun.

Whatever the difference is—racial, temperamental, religious, political, or climatic—it is too deep-seated to favour intermarriage. Only the royal houses, sprung from a common ancester—Alexander or another—frequently exchange princesses across the water.

Within Hunza the clans are all reckoned of equal status, but the clan of the Diramiting enjoys a considerable measure of prestige, and at communal ceremonies a Diramiting sets the pace or leads the dance. The story of their origin is interesting. There was once a clan of Tapkients who grew so bold and arrogant that their offences cried to heaven. They were reported to put bread to ignoble uses, they were known to address their mothers by the term *zizi*, which is the exclusive privilege of royal or saiyyid families, and they were haughty and stiff-necked towards their Mir. In vain the eldest royal son implored his father to "do something about it," and when the Mir refused to take suitable measures, the young prince impatiently laid his own schemes. A great gathering of all the clans was to be held on a nameless space of open desert where Aliábád now stands, and the Tapkients attended in full force. The prince plied them with strong *'araq*, and when they had well drunk fell upon them with his retainers and slew every man, boy, and male infant. He did not know that one of the Tapkients had allowed his wife to return to her own people for the birth of her first child. The posthumous infant was called Diram, and from him are sprung the Diramiting of to-day, who carry themselves without arrogance and do not call their mothers *zizi*.

Child marriages do not take place in Hunza, but a girl will rarely pass sixteen or a boy eighteen unwed. The parents seek out a house among some other clan—frequently a house with which marriage relationships already exist—where there is a potential mate of suitable age and standing, and negotiations proceed between the families. In theory the young folk are not consulted; but in practice, where children have romped and played and worked together there is no doubt that per-

course marry again, taking with her to her new home any unweaned child, but leaving older children with her first husband's parents. If, however, she has grown sons, it is considered not obligatory but more honourable of her "to guard her husband's grave" as they phrase it; the sons will either retain her at home as still the *núli gus* of the joint house, or they may give her an adjacent home of her own with her still unmarried girls. In either case they will maintain her with all deference and respect.

When a woman marries she by no means loses her identity. She becomes a "wife of the Diramiting" without ceasing to be "a daughter of the Buróng," and when in due course she dies, her own tribal brothers will assist her husband's in performing the last rites. She pays frequent visits to her parents' house, joining when she comes in whatever work is going on; if her family can afford to receive her, she may even go to stay for a lengthy period; it is not unusual for her to take her first baby home and stay for a year after its birth. This does not mean neglect of her husband, for he will still have his mother and sisters-in-law to fend for him. We used to chaff Bibo Gímo's married daughter, whose husband lived in Dorkhan, and ask what he would say to her long absence; but she had, in fact, come to help her mother before and after baby Faqér's birth.

Marriage-related families continually exchange small gifts of fruit or vegetables in season, for at different levels fruit will ripen earlier or later by several weeks; we would see Kaniza, for instance, carrying a small basket of early mulberries to her mother's people or to her married sister in Báltít, who would no doubt send in return some late fruit from Báltít when ours in Aliábád was over. In rush times of harvest, too, relations-in-law are quick to help each other, and a man owes the same courtesies of speech to his wife's parents as to his own.

Except for the physical difficulties of moving about it, Hunza is distinctly a place for the old. No detestable scientific innovations have come to create a gulf between the generations; long after he is unable to help with the heavy work the old man's experience is of value to his great-grandchildren. Levy